

Message Text

SECRET

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15

ACTION NEA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7890

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

GFHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 524

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSYIMUSCAT

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, YE, SA

SUBJECT: YAR VISIT OF PRINCE SULTAN: POLITICAL ASPECTS

REF: SANA 1313 (NOTAL)

COMMENT: HAMDI MAY RPT MAY HAVE SCORED POLITICAL HAT TRICK IN
VISIT OF SAUDI PRINCE SULTAN: (A) MORE SAUDI SUPPORT

THAN EVER BEFORE FOR HAMDI PERSONALLY AND FOR CENTRAL
GOVERNMENT, (B) SAUDI AGREEMENT TO SUPPLY WESTERN KCMS, PERHAPS
WITHOUT ABRUPT END OF SOVIET SUPPLY, AND (C) TURNING CHIEF
SAUDI SKEPTIC INTO COOPERATIVE FRIEND.

1. NO PRINCE FROM KINGDOM HAD EVER VISITED YEMEN
OFFICIALLY SINCE 1970 RECONCILIATION, AND YEMENIS
HAVE FREQUENTLY LAMENTED AND CRITICISED SAUDI
UNWILLINGNESS GIVE NEW RELATIONSHIP PERSONAL FORM OF
RECOGNITION RESPECTABILITY. VISIT OF PRINCE
SULTAN, HOWEVER, NOT ONLY MET THIS LONG FELT
PSYCHOLOGICAL NEED, BUT GAVE YEMENIS CHANCE TO HONOR--
AND PERHAPS PROPITIATE-- SAUDI WHO THOUGHT TO
BE MOST SKEPTICAL OF INCREASED SUPPORT FOR REPUBLIC
AND CENTRAL GOVERNMENT IN PARTICULAR.

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2. BY ALL ACCOUNTS, NEVERTHELESS, VISIT BEGAN COLDLY, WITH SAUDIS INSISTING ON EXPLANATIONS OF REPORTS -- WHICH THEY ATTRIBUTED TO USG -- THAT YEMENIS HAD SIGNED NEW AND LARGE ARMS AGREEMENT WITH SOVIET UNION.

3. WE STILL HAVE ONLY PARTIAL ACCOUNTS OF HOW IMPASSE WAS BROKEN. WE KNOW IT INVOLVED LONG SESSION WITH HAMDI ALONE WITH SAUD, AND LONGER SESSIONS LATER -- OBVIOUSLY WHEN ICE WAS BROKEN -- INVOLVING SULTAN AND HAMDI. ARMS TALKS, WHICH APPARENTLY CAME LAST, INCLUDED ONLY FOUR MEN: HAMDI, SULTAN, YAR COS GHASHMI AND SAUDI MILITARY ATTACHE HUDDAYAN.

4. HAMDI REPORTEDLY DENIED THERE WAS A NEW AGREEMENT AND EXPLAINED -- ONCE AGAIN -- WHY LONG WESTERN DELIVERY TIMES REQUIRED HIM TO ACCEPT SOME SOVIET WEAPONS AS INTERIM MEASURES. WHAT HE TOLD SULTAN SPECIFICALLY ABOUT WEAPONS -- AND HOW SULTAN REACTED -- WE DON'T KNOW. DURING VISIT WE ONCE AGAIN GOT RUMOR FROM ALL SIDES THAT MIG-21'S AND T-55'S WERE COMING IMMINENTLY. COULD BE, BUT GHASHMI DENIES IT (SEPTTEL). WE'LL SEEK MORE INFO AFTER RETURN OF HAMDI WHO IS OUT OF COUNTRY IN OMAN.

5. WE DO KNOW THAT SULTAN DID EVERYTHING HAMDI COULD POSSIBLY HAVE WANTED IN MAKING IT CLEAR THAT SAUDI FAVOR FELL ON CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AND HAMDI IN PARTICULAR. SULTAN DID MEET WITH ABDALLAH BIN HUSSAIN -- RECEIVING HIM PRIVATELY ONCE AT THE SAUDI AMBASSADOR'S HOUSE AND VISITING ABDALLAH'S HOUSE ONCE -- BUT SULTAN REPORTEDLY ASKED PERMISSION TO DO SO IN ADVANCE AND TOLD ABDALLAH NOT RPT NOT TO MAKE TROUBLE FOR HAMDI. AT ABDALLAH'S HOUSE, THESE VERY CLEAR AND EVEN STERN EXPRESSIONS OF SAUDI SUPPORT WERE DELIVERED TO LARGE GROUP OF SHAYKHS ASSEMBLED FOR SULTAN VISIT, AND EFFECT WAS UNSETTLING FOR ABDALLAH AND GRATIFYING FOR HAMDI. WE HAVE NO REPORTS OF EXPRESSION OF SAUDI INTEREST IN JOB FOR ABDALLAH, IN NEW ELECTIONS OR IN ANY ASPECT OF INTERNAL POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT OF YEMEN.

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6. COMMENT: SO FAR AS WE CAN TELL AT THIS POINT, VISIT ENDED WITH WARM AND UNDERSTANDING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN HAMDI AND SULTAN. IF THE SULTAN'S COMMITMENT TO DEAL EXCLUSIVELY WITH CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AND TO ARM YARG MILITARY REPRESENT LARGE AND WELCOME POLITICAL STEPS FORWARD. THESE SERVE US INTERESTS. AT SAME TIME, TALKS MAY HAVE MADE

IT POSSIBLE TO CONTINUE SOME INTERIM SOVIET MILITARY SUPPLY AND
ADVISORY ROLES. HOWEVER, SULTAN BROUGHT WITH HIM QUITE A FEW OF
NEW SAUDI MILITARY TEAM, AND WE HOPE CORNER HAS AT LAST BEEN
TURNED ON THE DECISIVE ARMS QUESTIONS. WE DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY,
HOWEVER,
THIS SHOULD ALL BE CONCEALED -- NOTHING IN THE COMMUNIQUE,
EVERYTHING VERY CLOSELY HELD HERE IN SANAA. THE BLACK-OUT OF
NEWS, MAY EXPLAIN WHY UNSUALLY WELL INFORMED PERSONS IN SANAA
ARE REPEATING CONFUSED AND NEGATIVE ACCOUNTS OF SULTAN VISIT.
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